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RUEH AR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2322
RUEH DS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2441
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000874

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR G. GARLAND AND BWALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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SUBJECT: ZANU-PF CONCERNED ABOUT LOSS OF MBEKI

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) ZANU-PF officials appear concerned about the impact the sudden forced resignation of South African President Thabo Mbeki will have on the implementation of the recently signed Zimbabwean power-sharing agreement, as well as relations with South Africa going forward. They fear the replacement of a ZANU-PF sympathetic Mbeki with potentially a more pro-MDC mediator could lead to pressure for additional political concessions. This opinion was not shared by South African diplomats in Harare, nor by academics in Johannesburg, who believed a Zuma-led government was unlikely to significantly alter policies towards Zimbabwe. Mbeki's resignation may also provide ZANU-PF with an excuse to delay or prevent the implementation of the deal.

ZANU-PF Concerns About Mbeki Resignation

¶2. (SBU) Godfrey Chamisa, a member of Simba Makoni's team with longstanding ZANU-PF ties, told us on September 23 that the Mbeki resignation should worry Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Mugabe had a close and decades-long relationship with Mbeki, and it was well known that Mbeki was instrumental in pressuring Tsvangirai to accept the deal signed on September 15. Additionally, it was commonly assumed that any new mediator would be a Jacob Zuma supporter. Zuma's base of support with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has long been a source of tensions between the Zuma-ANC camp and the Mugabe regime. Chamisa reminded us that the GOZ had barred COSATU leaders from entering Zimbabwe on a fact finding mission prior to the March elections, and during a similar mission several years ago, had physically expelled COSATU leaders from Zimbabwe.

¶3. (SBU) Eldred Masunungure, a well-respected political

analyst at the University of Zimbabwe, agreed with Chamisa's sentiments. In a discussion with poloff on September 24, he said that ZANU-PF officials are displeased that Mbeki is gone and are anxious about who will assume his mediator role. Their preference would be for him to stay on as a senior statesman in the fashion of former Mozambican President Chissano, who despite his notable political and economic achievements was also a lifelong friend of Mugabe. Masunungure also cited ZANU-PF concerns that the UN Security Council could reintroduce a resolution against Zimbabwe, and this time they would not be able to rely on Mbeki's strong opposition to such a resolution.

¶4. (SBU) A positive development that ZANU-PF insiders associated with Mbeki's resignation was that it could provide them with an additional opportunity to delay or deter the implementation of the power-sharing agreement. In Masunungure's words, "For ZANU-PF, this is a golden opportunity to scuttle the deal." There have been numerous reports of discontent within ZANU-PF about the deal, as many senior officials feel Mugabe gave away too much.

But Will Anything Change?

¶5. (SBU) On September 23, poloff met with Willem Geerlings, a senior South African diplomat posted to Harare, who confided that he suspected that a new Zuma administration in South Africa would be unlikely to handle Zimbabwe much

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differently. Geerlings based this on two factors: the ANC commonly regarded the recently signed agreement as a good deal, and any South African administration would be leery of adopting a more aggressive posture with Zimbabwe out of concern at being perceived as "bullying their African neighbors."

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Whether or not South Africa's stance toward Zimbabwe changes, in the short term expectations of a tilt toward the MDC could exert pressure on ZANU-PF, and encourage Tsvangirai to hold out for a better deal in the distribution of cabinet positions. We fear, however, that it is more likely that ZANU-PF will use the resignation (and consequent uncertainty about the mediation) as another tactic to delay implementation, which would set back already slim prospects for positive change in Zimbabwe. END COMMENT.
MCGEE